

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

14 June 2006, 6pm-8pm

City Hall L280

1. Call to order and introductions (6:02)

SPAB members in attendance: Jodie Vice (Chair), Jean Healy, Chris Tachibana (Board Secretary), Rob Fellows, Sarah Ross-Viles, Howard Wu, Nicole DeFrank (Get Engaged), Tammy Frick, Peg Staeheli, Ben Smith, Celeste Gilman

SPAB members absent: Molly McCarthy (Vice Chair)

SDOT staff liaison: Megan Hoyt

Presenter: Benita Staadecker (SDOT Street Use Division)

Guests: Seattle City Councilmember Sally J. Clark, Mike Hendrix (SDOT Pedestrian Program)

Public: Matthew Amster-Burton, former SPAB member

2. Council Presentation to Councilmember Clark (6:03)

Introductions to Board members

Board Presentations:

Jean thanked the city for working on accessibility and wayfinding by installing curb ramps, truncated domes and APS signals. She said we need to think of plans and funding to continue improvements. She pointed out that some places have curb ramps leading diagonally into traffic. SDOT responses have been good, for example recently when people complained about a loud APS signal.

Sally Clark asked which intersection and about truncated domes. Jean answered Madison and 17th for the APS intersection and defined truncated domes as the white, raised squares on ramps for wayfinding at crosswalks.

Peg outlined SPAB's work with SDOT to improve the Right of Way Manual and move it to the web. A continuing issue is trucking and pedestrian conflicts, for example increasing turning radii which decreases pedestrian zones. We'll also be watching frontage issues that can create voids in sidewalks. Recently, we've also addressed sidewalk closures at construction, maintenance of sidewalks. Regarding funding for sidewalks, we support the current measures and are supporting the Ped Master Plan.

Rob said he and Jodie had just delivered letters to City Council members stating our support for a transportation initiative and our long range vision to complete the sidewalk network. This is all part of connecting urban villages. He concluded by explaining that we have a broad scope that includes major projects, design, and accessibility. We want to volunteer our time to add value to the city, so we hope the Council think of us as allies.

Sally Clark asked about the "bridging the gaps" proposal and said it's hard to determine how much of the package is for sidewalks, how many blocks the funding covers and what priorities would be, for example north of 85th and south of Spokane. Rob and Peg agreed and said \$500,000 is half a block, and we've heard there are 500 miles of missing sidewalk. Adequacy of funding and prioritization were addressed in the recent letter to the Council.

Sally Clark asked about the Pedestrian Master Plan. Megan said SDOT is very interested. Jodie said we've asked for this in the last two budget cycles and it has been mentioned in budget discussions.

Sally Clark asked why some curb ramps are placed diagonally. Megan said they have varied in the past with federal changes and what else, like utilities, are present.

Peg said that it will be important to know budget details, like for moving utilities at corners for sidewalks. Sally agreed that we need to know details and who will pay for drainage, curb and sidewalk. She understands the issues from her experience in trying to fund neighborhood projects. Rob and Sally discussed the possible effectiveness of combining budgets and responsibilities from different departments. A problem is responsibilities, for example of property owners for trees and other street treatments.

The Board thanked Councilmember Clark for attending.

3. SDOT Sandwich Board Directors Rule (6:30)

Presenter: Benita Staadecker (SDOT Street Use Division, benita.staadecker@seattle.gov; 206 615-1224)

Benita Staadecker spoke about a proposal to require permits for A-board signs that hasn't gone forward. A-Boards are covered in Title 23 of the Seattle Municipal Code, but neither law nor executive want to open the sign code to revisions at the present time.

The current policy is tolerance of A-boards. They are banned except in business improvement areas. BIAs must fulfill specific requirements, and there are three: Broadway, Pioneer Square, Pike Place Market. A-boards are not allowed in residential areas and no balloons are allowed, so the

Annual Permit staff should be called if an A-board breaks these rules. Once, an effort was made to collect illegal signs but there were protests, so rules are now enforced only in Metro Bus Zones, within 5 feet of an ADA ramp or chained to a public pole. Businesses with an illegal A-board get a call and are given 30-60 minutes to remove them before Benita's team comes by with bolt cutters and a truck. Specific sizes of A-boards are allowed in public right of way during specific times of real estate open houses. The current policy is voluntary compliance to have one sign at the entrance to their business, otherwise it is "off-premise advertising". Communities need to police this themselves. The criterion is a 5-foot minimum safe passage on the sidewalk.

Nicole asked for clarification. Benita explained that the primary goal is to prevent a sight-impaired person from having to walk a slalom path down the sidewalk, so parking kiosks and other variabilities are also considered.

Peg asked about Metro bus zones. Benita said that as long as there are 5 clear feet through the bus zone, an A-board is okay at business entrances.

Tammy asked if consideration is made for places where a bus stop would be crowded with waiting passengers. Benita said this is an issue, along with sidewalk cafes.

Matthew asked for clarification on the rule, which Benita confirmed is that no A-boards are allowed outside the BIAs. Street Use has been instructed to tolerate them but respond to complaints. Matthew and Benita discussed the implications of a policy that tolerates law breaking. Street Use is proactive on large A-boards that may be sight hazards for traffic, like parking lot signs.

Jean said when A-boards block a clear path, she asks businesses to move them but they usually do not help her. If they are not related to the business, she moves them without even asking. She approves of the \$500 fine that can be imposed. Benita said to phone or email Street Use rather than moving A-boards and they try to respond in 24 hours.

Peg said A-boards with information about pedestrian obstacles at construction can be being part of the obstacle. Benita said they are coordinating with SDOT on this.

Rob asked about keeping a continuous 5-foot corridor at places with multiple entries. Benita said the first consideration is keeping the building entrance clear but problems are multiple businesses with one entrance

and keeping the lane next to parking and the parking kiosk clear.

Ben asked about a sidewalk cafe between 6th and 7th and Pine, where there is also a loading zone. Benita said that was checked and is 5 feet, but that area is becoming more crowded. The priority is to prevent people walking into the street and balancing the level of service to the public.

Celeste asked if the 5 feet rule applies to utilities, e.g. at 65th and 15th where utility structures block the 5 foot wide path. Benita said utilities take priority but the project manager should have been aware that would come up. Mailboxes can be moved but probably not utility boxes and poles. Megan said call 684-ROAD. Rob said that should be taken care of in the design process.

Megan offered the help of the board in reviewing new proposals.

4. Round Robin (7:05)

Ben said a delivery truck dumping lumber at his house began by blocking the sidewalk, then blocked a bus for 10 minutes, getting a ticket in the process. After that, they got a city permit to block the sidewalk. Matthew said in his Capitol Hill neighborhood, an SUV can block the sidewalk continuously for the cost of only a parking ticket.

Rob has been looking at reducing traffic signal cycles in Greenwood. This is also motivated by pedestrian issues, like preventing people cutting through the neighborhood. Greenwood community had a good meeting that started to find resolutions that will improve traffic and also improve pedestrian conditions. He and Jodie delivered letters on the project fundings to the City Council members. He is also working on Transit Now.

Nicole went to the Safe Routes to Schools workshop. She asked what funds come from the city, state or district. Megan said Safe Routes to Schools is an annual program on spot improvements at schools, funded by the city. Programs at specific schools might be state funded. At the workshop, grants of 7 million for 2 years was mentioned, so we might think of how to promote their use. Megan, Jodie and Rob said it helps just for the schools know grants are available and SPAB can endorse proposals.

Chris wrote a draft overall advisory on transportation projects but wondered if we should break it into individual advisories. After a presentation on Alaskan Way in July, we could write that advisory. Jodie said multiple advisories might be more effective. Rob said the EIS

supplemental draft comes out soon (July). Celeste said that she, Tammy and Howard met about the waterfront and all the projects tied into it. Consensus was the plan should be individual advisories that each stress pedestrian connections between the areas of the projects.

Jean went to the latest "Mercer Mess" meeting. In her discussion, people were unhappy about the effect on the businesses. The SDOT presenter was good and Jean's group discussed pedestrian issues, led by David from Feet First.

Jean said recently, at Rainier and 23rd, which has an APS signal, a bus turned left just as the APS signal went off so the bus driver ran a red or the signal is off or possibly cars and buses continue after the signal because they have been backed up. She's complained about this intersection.

Howard was at the South downtown EIS meeting. He made sure safety was added to the agenda. He met Stella from International District Housing. They want someone to speak to them, especially someone who can address non-english speakers.

Howard brought a manual from the Institute of Transportation Engineers about working with designers on issues for pedestrians in urban environments. Matthew recommends it. Rob said ITE writes the guidebooks so they are a strong resource.

Howard said pedestrian safety was an issue with lines for the Seattle International Film Festival. He was wondering what the crowd control rules are.

Celeste reiterated the sidewalk construction at 65th, which includes new ramps and truncated domes. She'd like to know more about the project and its funding, and why her neighborhood gets sidewalks repaired but other places have no sidewalks at all. Seeing the footprints in unpaved areas makes her wonder how pedestrians are counted.

Celeste expanded on the waterfront subcommittee meeting (Celeste, Howard, Tammy). They will meet again to plan further.

Tammy is going to call Benita and ask about large plywood "for sale" signs for vehicles in her neighborhood that are blocking sightlines. She was in San Francisco and saw the Embarcadero and is concerned that our Alaskan Way tunnel and surface arterial will have the same problem of a wide pedestrian crossing with lots of traffic. She brought the Allied Arts

Waterfront Master Vision Collaborative publication with their recommendations. Ben heard that a bypass tunnel is being considered with 6 lanes on the surface. Rob said more lanes on the surface do not help the traffic going through.

Jodie went to the Mayor's sidewalk event at Asa Mercer Middle School, which will receive the first new sidewalk. She and Rob wrote the transportation initiative letter. She updated us on the design ideas for the Plaza de la Raza on Beacon Hill, which could be open to vehicles but closed for farmer's markets. She has met with DPD and SDOT and Sound Transit to create more living street design. Rob said there used to be a street design and northlink and light rail group at SDOT. Megan said there is still one person at SDOT that works on that.

Jodie met with Barbara Clemens, staff for Councilmember Drago. They want a policy on vacation and maintenance of stairways and want ways to promote them. Peg said running clubs might be interested in the proposed "adopt a stairway" program. Jodie will forward information to anyone interested. Rob, Ben and Jodie discussed requirements and policy on maintaining and updating stairs.

Mike Hendrix introduced himself as the new engineer implementing the Sidewalk Program. He's learning Seattle streets and the organizations he'll be working with.

Megan said SDOT bike and ped have moved to floor 39. They have extra space and a new intern. The Council passed the Mayor's money for crosswalk improvements. There will be 19 projects in 2006 and 28 in 2007.

Peg was impressed with Councilmember Clark and her level of interest. Megan said the first crosswalk she worked on was one facilitated by Councilmember Clark. Peg went to hear Andy Goulding and the message was to persevere on pedestrian issues. She accomplished the Feet First presentation.

Peg attended an American Council on Engineering Policies conference. There is reluctance to consider anything except the proposed rebuild plan about the Viaduct.

Peg is having discussions with SDOT on utility vaults in the sidewalk and how they interfere with planting strips. Tammy asked for clarification on depth of the utilities. Peg said the basic issue is ownership of right of way

and density of utilities. Peg's priority is not losing greenery along streets. Tammy, Rob and Peg discussed vault lids that become slippery when wet. The newer ones do not but there are still old ones out there.

Celeste and Peg discussed porous pavement, which is a nice, walkable surface.

Celeste said we should communicate our Thomas Street overpass comments. Tammy asked about access to the drawings. Megan said questions about options should be addressed to John. Rob suggested looking at the SPAB email exchange on this.

Megan will update the contact information.

4. Committee Meeting reports and Upcoming Agenda (8:00)

Nicole is setting up the safety committee

Rob and Jodie met as the funding committee

Waterfront committee met and will plan to meet again

Upcoming agenda includes Alaskan Way Viaduct in July and field trip in August.

5. Adjourn (8:08)